



**BLM-WINNEMUCCA DISTRICT (WD)
PROGRAM OVERVIEW
For
Kenneth Collum, District Manager (Acting)
October 2015 through January 2016**

FLUID MINERALS/ENERGY

Black Rock Field Office (BRFO)

San Emidio: A Notice of Intent (NOI) was submitted by U.S. Geothermal Nevada LLC (USGN) to drill up to five temperature gradient (GT) holes. The NOI was approved and drilling commenced during the week of July 27. USGN completed drilling of the five GT holes. They quickly submitted GDP's to deepen two of the holes to 3500 feet and transform them to Observation (OB) wells. WDO NEPA determined that a DNA must be completed to allow the extension drilling. As of January 2016, BRFO is nearly finished with the DNA to allow drilling in 2016.



The old power plant was dissembled in the summer of 2015. The new power plant is producing approximately nine megawatts of electricity.

Gerlach Geothermal: A joint venture between United States Geothermal and Gerlach Green Energy drilled an authorized exploration well just northwest of the town of Gerlach in 2012. Currently, reclamation has been completed and reseeding is under way to get the site revegetated.



Humboldt River Field Office (HRFO)

Blue Mountain: The plant is operating normally and currently producing approximately 40 megawatts. Blue Mountain was purchased by Alta Rock in June of 2015. They will be proposing a number of changes to the existing plan to improve performance of the plant.

New York Canyon: Terra-Gen Power, Dixie Development Company has two approved projects. One is for drilling and testing up to 15 observation wells. The second is for a utilization plan (a 70 megawatt power plant) and inter-tie power lines. On-the-ground operations have not yet begun on either of these projects.

Brady Hot Springs: A proposal has been submitted by Ormat for a research project at the hot springs. The project is funded by the Department of Energy in coordination with a number of research facilities and universities. The project will consist of placing over 5 miles of fiber optic cable in the ground to track changes in the geothermal field when varying the infiltration locations and amounts. The plant is operating normally.

Leach Hot Springs. Ormat reports that no additional exploration is anticipated at the site at this time.

Baltazor Hot Springs: The company has placed a temporary hold on the project but will continue with baseline studies for the Sandhill Skipper.

Geothermal Leasing (WD): No expressions of interest were received for lands within the WD for the proposed September 2015 sale.

SOLID MINERALS

Black Rock Field Office

Hycroft Mine: In early July 2015, Hycroft suspended mining operations and downsized 230 employees. They continue to process gold and silver through the operation of the heap leach pads and processing plants. They completed construction of a 10 ton per day demonstration plant for processing sulfide ores and performed demonstrations of its operation to investors. On September 22, the company emerged from bankruptcy as a private company call Hycroft Mining Corp., shedding the old Allied Nevada name. They still do not plan to restarting mining operations for the near term, but plan to move forward with the EIS process for the Phase II mine expansion.



Humboldt River Field Office

Coeur Rochester Inc. (CRI): The Draft EIS for CRI's Plan Amendment 10 (POA10) and Closure Plan was released for public comment of 8/21/2015. Two open house public meetings were held during the public comment period. 142 comment letters were received during a 45-day period; however, 135 of those did not contain any substantive comments. The majorities of the comments were in support of the project and centered on the local and economic benefits. There were seven comment letters that contained substantive comments which included concerns on impacts to special status species, especially Preble's shrew, post-closure monitoring and mitigation activities, impacts to water and air, climate change, and recommendations on the preferred alternative and cultural mitigation. These comments were considered and addressed in Appendix A (Response to comments on the DEIS) of the Final EIS (FEIS). The FEIS is anticipated to be released in early Spring 2016.



Operations at Coeur Rochester Mine

During the public scoping of this DEIS, the *Record of Decision (ROD) and Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments for the Great Basin Region, Including the Greater Sage-Grouse Sub-Regions of Idaho and Southwestern Montana, Nevada and Northeastern California, Oregon, Utah, September 2015* (GRSG Plan and ROD) was signed September 21, 2015. To ensure compliance with this document, the maps and habitat categories from the GRSG Plan and ROD were compared to the initial habitat maps from BLM Instruction Memorandum (IM) 2012-044 (December 27, 2011) that were used in the development of this EIS. In comparing these two sets of maps, it was determined that there is less General habitat mapped within the disturbance area with the new maps contained in the GRSG EIS, than was analyzed in this EIS under the previous guidelines. It was determined that the analysis and resulting mitigation for GRSG outlined in Chapter 6 (Mitigation and Monitoring) of the EIS was in compliance with the guidelines outlined in the GRSG Plan and ROD. The proposed mitigation exceeds the requirements and standards under the new GRSG guidance, and would have a net conservation gain to the species. Therefore there were no changes necessary to the analysis or mitigation in the EIS for GRSG.

Rye Patch Gold: Two exploration plans were received from Rye Patch Gold: Wilco in the Coal Canyon area and Lincoln Hill in the lower Rochester area. The Plans of Operation for both Wilco and Lincoln Hill have been deemed complete and the NEPA kick off meeting was held September 16. Baseline studies are being finalized and the Preliminary EA is being drafted

Twin Creeks: The EA for the proposed Vista VIII Pit Expansion was approved. The Finding of No Significant Impact and Decision Record were signed on December 23, 2015. The Vista VIII expansion includes approximately 161 acres of public and private land within the existing plan boundary. It would expand the existing Vista pit east over an existing haul road, heap leach pad and surfaces already approved for structure/buildings disturbance. The heap leach pad has already been moved and the haul road and any structures would be moved prior to pit expansion. In addition to the expanded pit, the proposed project also includes continued

dewatering of the Vista Pit, placement of waste rock on existing waste rock facilities and other areas approved for placement, using existing ore processing and refining facilities, and realignment and construction of ancillary infrastructure including haul roads, access roads, and dewatering wells.



Twin Creeks geology in the pit

Florida Canyon Mine: The Florida Canyon Mine is presently idle with the exception of continuing leaching and processing. In February of 2015 NDEP placed the Florida Canyon Mine in non-compliance due to the contaminant plume that the mine has been working on for many years; BLM followed their lead and also placed them in non-compliance. NDEP also issued an order that required the mine to shut down the center portion of their heap leach pad as it was the only remaining possible source for the plume. At this point the mine has shut off flow to that portion of the leach pad as is moving forward with reclamation. The non-compliance issue is expected to be resolved by the end of January 2016. They are still unable to provide bonding for their most recent approved expansion and the majority of the workforce remains laid off.

Standard Mine: Mining operations at the Standard Mine are idle at this time but processing of existing heap leach facilities and reclamation will continue for a few years. There is a small amount of additional mining that could be done under the approved Plan of Operations.

Montezuma Mining – South Sleeper Exploration: Montezuma Mining has submitted an exploration plan of operations for the South Sleeper Project. The Draft EA is out for public comment until January 15, 2016.

Western Lithium - Kings Valley Lithium Exploration: Western Lithium Corp. (WLC) has an approved Plan of Operations for lithium exploration near Thacker Pass, north of Winnemucca, Nevada. WLC is continuing to refine the lithium processing operations at its demonstration plant in Germany. In February, 2015, the BLM approved another bulk sample that would be shipped overseas for testing. General communication and coordination has occurred regarding the

planned lithium mine, but nothing has been submitted, to date. Western Lithium and Lithium Americas merged in June of 2015. What impact this will have on the Kings Valley Lithium project and Clay Mine which they also acquired is unknown.

Western Lithium - Kings Valley Clay Mine: WLC submitted a mine plan of operations for specialty clay on October 5, 2012. The anticipated market for the specialty clay is the manufacture of high temperature/high pressure drilling fluids. This proposal is considered to be compatible with the still anticipated lithium mine. The Final EA, Finding of No Significant Impact, and Decision Record were signed on March 5, 2014. Clay mining operations have not begun, to date.

Spring Valley Exploration Project: Advanced exploration has been conducted on the Spring Valley Exploration project since an EA was completed in 2007. Exploration activities primarily consist of both reverse circulation and core drilling. The company has submitted an Amended plan of operations to expand the exploration activities. This plan amendment has been reviewed and is considered technically complete pending NEPA review; however a change of ownership of the property has put the project on hold.



Exploration drilling conducted at Spring Valley.

Marigold Mining Company: The mine was sold to Silver Standard Mining Company on February 6, 2014. Operations are continuing at the mine. The BLM received a modification to the Marigold Mine Plan of Operations and a notice of intent to prepare an EIS will be published in the Federal Register in the near future. Some initial issues identified are possible impacts to water resources and Sage-grouse.



Mine shovels and tracks in the Mackay Pit at Marigold Mine. The diesel shovel is on the left and is approximately the same size as the haul trucks. The new electric shovel on the right towers over the haul trucks and can fill them with two buckets. A haul truck is dumping waste on the Northwest Waste Rock Storage Area in the background.

Lone Tree Mine – Brooks Amendment: The EA and FONSI were signed on February 13, 2015. The Plan Amendment was approved on February 20, 2015.

Relief Canyon Mine: The mine was authorized to restart under the existing 1984 Plan of Operations on September 25, 2014. Mining is proposed to restart in the existing pits without expansion or deepening the existing pits. The BLM has received a modification to the existing Plan of Operations, and is in the process of preparing a draft EA.

The modification to the Plan includes:

- Expand the existing pits by approximately 68.3 acres while staying above the water table;
- Construct a new waste rock storage area;
- Close the old heap leach pads (Cells 1-4) by placing a three foot cover of overburden and waste rock;
- Increase the height for the new heap leach pads (Cells 6 and 7) from 54 feet to 200 feet;
- Add additional exploration drill roads and sites;
- Include a new Class III landfill integrated into the new waste rock storage area;
- Potentially process ores from other sites on the existing heap leach facilities; and
- Improve or add ancillary facilities including site communications, wells, piezometers, on-site analytical laboratory, warehouse facilities, storm water ditches, fencing, and roads.

These amendments will increase the total disturbance from 396.9 acres to 608.7 acres.

Mineral Materials

Preparations have been made to start an EA to designate Community Pits in Washoe County to facilitate use by Washoe County Road Department and the Public.

Hazardous Materials/Abandoned Mine Lands

A plan is being developed for covering the calcine pile located on McDermitt mine and BLM property. Material sites were evaluated for covering the pile and a final workplan will be developed with the intention of covering the pile in 2016.

We are in the process of finalizing the NEPA for closing a number of abandoned mines in the Desert Queen area. The project has been in cooperation with the Nevada Bureau of Mines, Nevada Department of Wildlife and the BLM.

Plans to remove non-hazardous waste at the Imlay Drum Site and install 2400 foot enclosure as an interim measure until funding can be obtained to remove remaining hazardous waste material.



Dry Canyon Mine producing magnesium used in nutritional supplements operated by MIN-AD.

CULTURAL, LANDS, AND REALTY

Black Rock Field Office

Lands and Realty:

We received applications for 15 existing range improvements, two access routes to private inholdings (surrounded by Wilderness) and two FLPMA ditch right-of-ways. Baseline surveys have been completed. During scoping we received seven (7) comments from the public. These are being reviewed. Resource specialists are working on Chapter 3 of the EA.

We received an application from UPRR to install/construct sand mitigation alternatives to reduce blowing sand from accumulating and causing interference issues on the rail system in the Smoke Creek Desert. The contractor is continuing to work with UPRR on the how to process this project proposal and whether or not they wish to continue. We should hear from them within the next few months with a decision on how they intend to proceed.

An application for a 345kV transmission line was proposed from NV Energy to support the Hycroft Mine Mill. The analysis of this project is proposed to be captured in the EIS previously discussed under the Black Rock Field Office, Hycroft Mine section of this report. On January 12, 2105, Hycroft Mine verbally stated they will not continue to move forward with the 345kV power line. They are reducing the size of their mill and the previously analyzed 120kV power line would be sufficient to operate the reduced size of the mill.

Cultural:

The Treatment Plan report for the original Hycroft Mine Expansion project is still in preparation. The mine has hired a new archaeological contractor and the report is on track to be completed by the end of 2016.

Hycroft is continuing expansion plans in the area around the existing Plan of Operations boundary and additional archaeological surveys have been completed as part of the planning process. The report for the Phase II expansion has been finalized and a Treatment Plan for the affected sites will be prepared.

BLM contracted with Far Western Anthropological Research Group to inventory the remaining 800 acres of the Soldier Meadows ACEC. The final report has just been received and indicates that Soldier Meadows was a significant location for early Native Americans in the region. Additional surveys will be completed this fiscal year.

Humboldt River Field Office

Lands and Realty:

The HRFO is currently processing an R&PP application from the City of Winnemucca which would facilitate the construction of a new water treatment facility. At 25 million dollars, this is the largest project in the history of the City of Winnemucca.

Paiute Pipeline and Southwest Gas have submitted two applications to construct two regulator stations and a new gas distribution line to serve the EP Minerals plant around Nightingale Hot Springs. We received a signed MOU and are working on a cost recovery agreement.

We are working on the cadastral survey request for the Pine Forest Land Exchange.

We are working our way through eight Desert Land Entry applications. This project is currently paused while we coordinate with the NV Division of Water Resources regarding the water rights/permits needed for the project areas.

Winnemucca is processing an amendment for CC Communication's ROW N-46572 on Desert Peak to add 20' to their 60' tower.

Cultural:

The Fifth Annual Native American Arts & Crafts Fair was held at the Humboldt Museum on November 21, 2016. Seven vendors and approximately 70 people attended this very successful event.

Planning and research is underway for an exhibit focused on prehistoric and historic use of the Humboldt River transportation corridor. The BLM is working with the Southern Nevada Conservancy, the Humboldt Museum and other partners on this exhibit which will be permanently housed at the Humboldt Museum in Winnemucca.

A number of Class III Section 106 inventories have been completed or are in progress for mining and geothermal operations, Abandon Mine Lands, Lands and Realty, Fuels and ES&R projects, etc. These include inventories for the Trinity Pit Expansion Project, the Daveytown Wells Project and the Poro Tomo Environmental Assessment. A cultural resource report for the Rye Patch Oreana Project has also been completed. Pro-active inventories have been undertaken in the Humboldt Sink and Smelser Pass areas.

A treatment plan has been prepared for mitigation for Coeur Amendment 10 and will be implemented following completion of the Coeur EIS.

The Unionville Cemetery Cultural Resources Report has been accepted by SHPO and coordination on the Unionville Cemetery R&PP for Pershing County will be commencing in the near future.

The Winnemucca District has been awarded an "Every Kid in a Park Transportation Grant" for 2016 Lovelock Cave Days. The grant will be used to help pay for transportation of fourth grade students to the annual event in May as well as other supplies and operations costs associated with the event.

RECREATION

Black Rock Field Office

Planning: The Black Rock Field Office welcomed new hire Dave Stack as the office's Outdoor Recreation Planner. Dave came over from the National Park Service and is new to the BLM. His

first order of business is developing a management plan for Trego Hot Springs. In recent years, the hot springs has been degraded by over use from visitors. More direct management of the springs will hopefully result in a better experience as well as improved resource conditions.

Special Recreation Permits (SRPs): Three recreation planners from the Winnemucca District Office attended Recreation Permit training in Reno the second week of December. This keeps staff up to date on the best current practices for processing recreation permits, which will be useful going into 2016 as applications continue to arrive. Recent applicants have inquired about the feasibility of activities such as vehicle timing, rock hounding, and drone test flights. Special recreation permits allow the BLM to monitor events to provide for protection of natural and cultural resources as well as ensure safe use of the land by organized recreationists. We look forward to an active 2016.

Outreach: The recent renaming of the National Conservation Lands System to the National Conservation Lands (NCL) also came with a new look. New signs with the NCL layout and logos have arrived at the office and will be installed this spring. Plans are also being made for the BLM to be a part of the classroom with the Every Kid in a Park initiative. Black Rock Field Office employees will be teaching Leave No Trace and promoting the Department of the Interior's year-long effort to get 4th graders and their families out to enjoy public lands in Nevada and beyond.

Burning Man 2015: A variety of post-event reports are being compiled on the B2015 Burning Man event. A kick-off meeting will occur in the first quarter of 2016

Comment [CKR1]: Can we update this?

Special Events

Currently the BRFO is working with its partner groups to come up with special events/activities for the 2016 calendar year.

Partner Group Activities

Friends of Black Rock will soon announce the Black Rock Field Office Artist in Residence Program for 2016 and will invite applications from interested artists. Work on a project to publish excerpts from visitor comment journals from Steven's Camp is continuing. The journals have been saved for many years and make fascinating reading. This partnering agency is also starting to work on brochures for the High Rock Canyon Trail / Stevens Camp and an OHV recreation brochure for the NCA.

The Black Rock Field Office is working with Friends of Nevada Wilderness to plan projects for the FY 2016 field season. Projects will include assisting the Black Rock Field Office with installation of wilderness boundary markers, restoration of trespass routes in wilderness areas, and campground maintenance around Soldier Meadows and Stevens Camp.



Humboldt River Field Office

Upcoming Competitive Special Recreation Permits (SRPs):

Applications for two off-road motorcycle race proposals scheduled for February have been received. These proposals are from member organizations of the Motorcycle Racing Association of Northern Nevada (MRANN) out of Reno. MRANN has a stellar reputation for conducting off-road racing in the Winnemucca District. Some of its members represent second and third generation enthusiasts and these participants fully understand and appreciate the responsibilities inherent in their use of public lands. The MRANN races are also one of our largest ‘family-oriented’ outdoor/overnight events.

Commercial Special Recreation Permits

Numerous Outfitters and Guides are in the process of sending in their end-of-year paper work for what appears to have been an excellent 2015 hunting season. On average the Winnemucca District processes about 25 hunter/guide permits per year.

Partners

Nevada Outdoor School will continue with hosting their interpretive snowshoe hikes, one being a moonlight snowshoe hike. These events occur in the Water Canyon recreation area.

Other Activities

The following projects are currently in the ‘formative/discussion’ phase:

- Initiation of Porter Springs improvements that would include repairing the enclosure fence, picnic table(s), shade structure(s) and a vault toilet. The NEPA requirements have been completed for these actions
- Trego Springs restoration, clean-up and improvements are also being discussed. Several alternatives are being considered
- A programmatic EA revisiting the rocket activities that take place on the Black Rock Desert that would benefit the staff/work-load in the future is also in the formative stages.

WILDERNESS

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics:

Winnemucca District continues reviewing and updating inventories for Lands with Wilderness Characteristics district-wide for projects undergoing NEPA analysis.

Wilderness Management: BRFO staff worked with small mining company responsible for vehicle incursion into the South Jackson Mountains Wilderness to address the trespass. FY 16 project planning is underway and includes rehab of other trespass routes in the South Jackson Mountains Wilderness and Pahute Wilderness, and to continue replacing carsonite boundary markers with metal pipe posts. Work on brochures for each wilderness area is also underway.

Humboldt River Field Office



Wilderness Study Area inventories continue in collaboration with conservation partner Friends of Nevada Wilderness.

The Pine Forest Wilderness was designated on December 19, 2014. Planning is underway for management of this special area that is home to a remnant cirque lake and a stand of white bark pine, a candidate species for threatened or endangered listing.

WILDLIFE, WATER AND VEGETATION

Black Rock Field Office

Comment [CKR2]: We need to delete one of these pictures

The Black Rock Field Office is coordinating with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nevada Department of Wildlife, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to begin a Riparian Rider project to improve Migratory Bird Habitat and improve Lahontan Cutthroat Trout (LCT) streams in the BRFO. The project is planned to be a three year project beginning in April 2016 and uses a rider to visit several LCT streams during the growing season to monitor use of streams from livestock and wild horses. One of the main goals of the project is to achieve streambank stability and to encourage vegetation growth by the rider moving animals off of the streams if the streams are being overused on a regular basis. Another goal is to have enough vegetation growth to diversify migratory bird habitat and to regulate the temperatures of the streams for LCT.



LCT in Battle Creek August 2015

Humboldt River Field Office

The primary workload of the staff continues to be providing input into use authorizations, grazing permit renewals, mining notices, right of ways, mine expansion proposals, geothermal projects and drought monitoring.



View of the headwaters spring sources (main source is just out of the frame to the left) showing the pipe fence enclosure and relocated stock tank outside the enclosure fencing.

BLM, in coordination with NDOW and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, completed a project at the headwater springs of Crowley Creek, a Lahontan Cutthroat Trout (LCT) occupied stream. The project included moving the water troughs out of the headwater meadows and then fencing cows out of the springs/meadow. The project will benefit sage-grouse, pygmy rabbits and LCT.

During the summer field season, we will continue to deploy thermographs and collect Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) data on riparian areas in allotments scheduled for Rangeland Health Assessments.

The Field Office is working with NDOW on the development of an Elk Herd Management Area, the first in Humboldt County. The planning board, establish for the program, includes agencies, county representatives, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and interested ranchers.

WILD HORSES AND BURROS



Staff is currently working on Gather Plan Environmental Assessments for the Blue Wing and Smoke Creek Complexes. These EAs will analyze the impacts of gathering and treating wild horses and burros with fertility control in eight Herd Management Areas (HMAs) and four Herd Areas (HA) in the BRFO and HRFO. The HMAs within the Smoke Creek Complex are the Fox and Lake and Buffalo Hills HMAs. The HMAs within the Blue Wing Complex (BWC) are the Lava Beds, Kamma Mountains, Blue Wing Mountains, Seven Troughs, Shawave and Nightingale Mountains HMAs. There are also four HAs included in the BWC and they are the Antelope, Selenite, Truckee, and Trinity HAs. Both the Smoke Creek Complex and the Blue Wing Complex EAs are expected to go out for public review late summer or early fall.

Black Rock Field Office

HMAs within the Black Rock Field Office are being monitored for forage and water availability and wild horse and burro animal health. Census flights using Simultaneous Double Count Method are currently being planned to fly the Tri-State Complex in coordination with Northern California District and Oregon BLM, these flights will likely occur in June, this includes the Granite Range, Calico Mountains, Warm Springs Canyon, Black Rock Range, and McGee Mountain HMAs within the WD. The Jackson Mountains and Fox and Lake HMA are also in the process of planning for a census flight using Simultaneous Double Count Method, these flights will likely occur in April. Forage, water, and wild horse and burro conditions are continually monitored through the winter months to insure availability of water and forage for the wild horses and burros, along with maintaining a healthy body condition. Drought conditions are also being monitored to ensure proper compliance with the WD Drought Plan and associated EA.

Humboldt River Field Office

During the fall and winter of 2015, field-going staff on the HRFO has been vigilant in recording wild horse body condition, overall animal health and observations regarding available forage and water primarily via drought monitoring. Escalating issues due to continuing drought through the winter of 2015 are being closely monitored and reported, one area in particular is Vernon Well and surrounding rangeland, this is a priority due to problems with the windmill and lack of water for wild burros.

Census flights using the Simultaneous Double Count Method were conducted in December and January 2014-15 on the entire Blue Wing Complex, Tobin and Augusta HMAs and Augusta, Sonoma and East Range HAs. That data was sent to USGS for analysis; the final analysis has been received with updated population estimates.

Inquiries are being made to begin using fertility control as a principal means to reduce numbers of wild horses and burros. Efforts have begun to outreach to the public for volunteers to assist with fertility control projects.

RANGE



Black Rock Field Office / Humboldt River Field Office

The range staff has enjoyed the recent “normal” winter weather we have received and unlike the last few years have had many days where they could not go in the field due to the weather. On those days staff has been working on cleaning up range files within the office and preparing for the upcoming 2016/2017 grazing season. Staff has also kept busy with making sure that grazing permits and Exchange of Use (EOU) agreements are current and up to date. Where appropriate staff has worked with permittees to have them provide all necessary documentation needed to renew permits and EOU agreements.

Staff members also recently attended the N2 Grazing Board meetings (one in November and one in January) and held discussions with the Board about the office providing more of an open dialogue with the N2 Board about what is occurring not only in the Range program but Wildlife, Wildhorse and Burro and other Natural Resource programs at future N2 Board Meetings. Staff and the N2 Board feel like there is already open dialogue, but both agree that more is only going to benefit and strengthen staff and livestock permittee relationships in the future.

Drought Monitoring

Post Use Grazing Utilization Inspections

Drought monitoring inspections have continued into the fall with permittee involvement in advance of any livestock turnouts on public land during the winter months. Permittee involvement in advance of livestock turnout allows the permittee ample time to make any adjustments to their livestock management based upon the data collected from the allotments. Livestock permittees have continued to voluntarily reduce their livestock numbers or implement other temporary changes as necessary during this continuing drought.

Along with the pre-turnout inspections for livestock, Range Specialists were busy the first part of fall conducting after grazing utilization monitoring with permittee involvement where applicable. This post use grazing inspection is a yearly occurrence regardless of the drought to determine if terms and conditions based on allotment management plans are achieved.

Drought response actions

Staffs from both offices continue to work with grazing permittees on various projects that include water hauling, changes to grazing systems, and range improvement repairs and/or modifications and are completing the associated NEPA for these various project. Some of these actions are being funded by the NRCS/Farm Services through their cost share programs.

Grazing Permit Renewal

The NVSO is now fully staffed with all the positions that will aid the districts with the backlog of permit renewals. Permits due for renewal have been documented and prioritized. Some of the renewals will be worked on by the NVSO team with the others being done by the district staff, based upon resource issues. We have been informed by the State Permit Renewal Team that the first Grazing Allotment they will be working on is the Argenta Allotment complex in the Battle Mountain District.

Black Rock Field Office

Coordination continues with the Forest Service Enterprise Teams on the Soldier Meadows/Buffalo Hills/Coyote/Leadville Assessment and Evaluations.

Humboldt River Field Office

Staff recently finished up interviewing for two Rangeland Management Specialist positions in the Field Office and is pleased to announce that two new RMSs will be starting on February 8, 2016. Upon their arrival they will spend time in the office learning their assigned allotments as well as completing all the necessary paperwork and training required. The office will issue a letter to permittees and the interested public of their assigned allotments after their arrival.

Staff also completed a multi-agency project in mid-August on the Montana Mountains specifically in the Jordan Meadow allotment at the headwaters of Crowley Creek a Lahontan Cutthroat Trout occupied stream. The grazing permittee along with Nevada Department of Wildlife, US Fish and Wildlife and the BLM completed construction of a fencing and water development project that protects the headwaters of Crowley Creek while still providing offsite water for livestock. Funding was provided from Ruby Pipeline mitigation monies and NDOW.



Headwaters of Crowley Creek pre construction of a perimeter fence and offsite livestock water developments

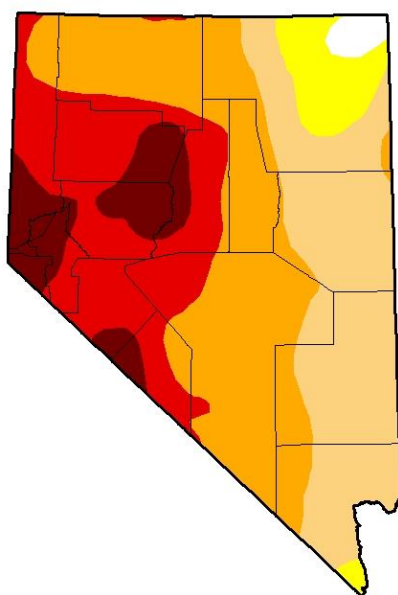


Headwaters of Crowley Creek post construction of a perimeter fence and one of two offsite livestock water developments

FIRE

The fire danger across the Winnemucca District is currently “**LOW**”. Most of the Winnemucca District remains in a state of “Severe to Exceptional”. Conditions are expected to slowly improve through the winter-spring timeframe

U.S. Drought Monitor Nevada



December 29, 2015

(Released Thursday, Dec. 31, 2015)

Valid 7 a.m. EST

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	1.34	98.66	93.08	65.49	31.74	9.35
Last Week 12/22/2015	1.34	98.66	93.08	65.49	31.74	9.35
3 Months Ago 9/29/2015	0.00	100.00	94.76	76.08	37.52	15.93
Start of Calendar Year 12/31/2014	0.00	100.00	96.98	68.25	48.38	11.89
Start of Water Year 9/28/2015	0.00	100.00	94.76	76.08	37.52	15.93
One Year Ago 12/29/2014	0.00	100.00	96.98	68.25	48.38	11.89

Intensity

D0 Abnormally Dry	D3 Extreme Drought
D1 Moderate Drought	D4 Exceptional Drought
D2 Severe Drought	

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

Author:

Chris Fenimore
NOAA/NESDIS/NCEI



<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

Operations/Aviation/Dispatch

- 11 Fire Engines staffed at Winnemucca, McDermitt, Lovelock, and Gerlach stations.
- 1 BLM- FS Service First Interagency Fire Engine staffed in Paradise Valley.
- 1 NDF Engine staffed at the Humboldt Camp.
- 3 Fire Dozers staffed in Winnemucca
- 2 Water Tenders staffed, 1 in Winnemucca and 1 in McDermitt.
- 2015 Aircraft: 2 Single Engine Air tankers (SEATs) in Winnemucca and 2 SEATs in McDermitt) 1 aerial supervision platform (Air Attack) and 1 Type 3 helicopter with module in Winnemucca.
- CNIDC is staffed nearly to capacity. 1 Assistant Center Manager (USFS position) is vacant. CNIDC dispatches for Battle Mountain and Winnemucca Districts- BLM, NDF

Engine 5162 (located at Humboldt Camp), Santa Rosa and Austin-Tonopah Ranger Districts FS, and Northwestern Western Nevada BIA jurisdictions.

2015 Fire Season

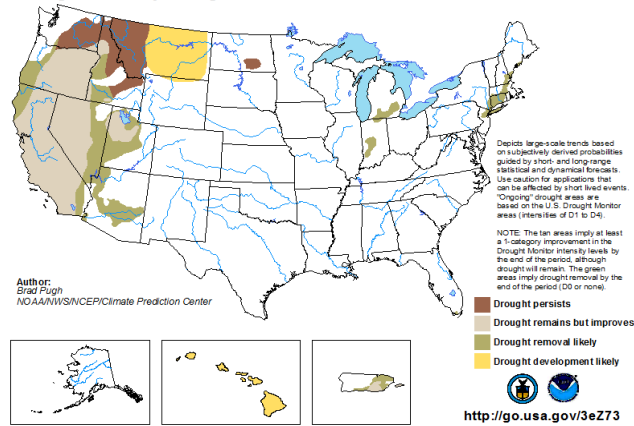
- BLM responded to 54 fires in 2015 for a total of 411 acres
- General Cause/Acres:
 - Total Lightning Fires: 14 for 280 acres.
 - Total Human Fires: 39 for 131 acres.
- 100% Initial Attack success rate for Winnemucca District & Santa Rosa Ranger District - (2nd straight year)
- Sage grouse acres burned:
 - 124.4 ac Core/PPH,
 - 5.6 ac Priority/PGH
 - 73.3 ac of General Habitat
- All Incidents in 2015 were managed at the Type 3 level or below by district Initial Attack resources.
- Approximately 18% lower occurrence than normal
- Approximately 97% fewer BLM Acres burned than normal
- 2 Cost Share Agreements / Assistance by Hire Billings - in progress from 2015.

Highway Fuel Breaks (Hwy 290 shown here) are maintained early summer and have proven effective time and time again to keep fires small until resources can arrive on scene.



290 Fire, approximately 3/4 ac. held by BLM fuel break. June 30, 2015 near Paradise Valley, NV.

U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook Valid for December 17 - March 31, 2016
Drought Tendency During the Valid Period Released December 17, 2015



Fuels Management

Highway Fuel Breaks: Existing highway fuel breaks along Highways 95, 290, 140, and 400 will be disked in May/June of 2016 within the highway right of way to stop or slow fire originating along the roadways.

Winnemucca WUI Fuel Breaks: In fall 2015, 285 acres of maintenance seeding and mowing treatments were completed.

Paradise WUI Green strips: Several fuel breaks in the Paradise Valley Area are planned to be maintained with a herbicide treatment in concert with Medusa head rye abatement treatments for a total of 2,500 acres. The treatments protect the community of Paradise Valley, priority sage grouse and LCT habitat in the area, and reduce invasive species in the valley.

Unionville WUI Fuels Treatment: This mechanical treatment is identified in the Unionville Community Wildfire Protection Plan and is maintained every year. The 12-acre fuelbreak protects the community of Unionville, and will receive annual maintenance in June 2016

Montana Mountains/Lone Willow PMU Project: This is a multifaceted project, which includes Healthy Lands, Hazardous Fuels, and FIAT projects, which are designed to protect T&E species habitat and restoration treatments to improve wildlife habitat. Projects completed to date include 3,534 acres of seeding treatments, 1,050 acres of sagebrush and bitterbrush hand planting, numbering approximately 103,000 seedlings, 3,243 acres of chemical treatment to control invasive annuals, and 450 acres of mowing Project that are still in progress include 2,500 of weed treatments and 600 acres of riparian restoration and woody riparian species hand planting that will be completed in spring of 2016, and 100 acres of road improvement for fire suppression access will be completed in early spring 2016.

Little Owyhee Roadway Fuelbreaks: These fuelbreaks are part of a larger planned comprehensive fuelbreak system that includes four BLM districts (Winnemucca, Elko, Vale, and Boise) across Nevada, Idaho, and Oregon. The project will be completed in phases with concurrent invasive annuals treatment and re-seeding if necessary. 1,000 acres of previously mowed areas were treated with herbicide in October, with another 1,500 acres of mowing to be completed in December 2015/January 2016, followed by invasive annual weed control. .

Currently in the planning stages is the Double H – Bilk Creek Cooperative Fuels Management Project. This will be the next landscape level project that will encompass the remainder of the Lone Willow Population Management Unit (PMU). This project will protect and restore important greater sage grouse habitat and other resource values through a combination of fuels management and habitat restoration work. This planning process is scheduled to be completed and ready to implement in late Fiscal Year 2016.

The Programmatic Vegetation Management Plan for the Winnemucca District was released for public comment in July 2015, from which multiple comments were received. Comments were addressed and preparation of the Biological Assessment for formal consultation with the USFWS is underway. This comprehensive plan analyzes the breadth of tools available to manipulate and manage vegetation district wide for Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation, weed treatment, forest management, habitat restoration, and hazardous fuels projects.

Mitigation/Education/Prevention

There are currently 13 community events planned across the Winnemucca District. These include events such as Lovelock Frontier Days, the Ecology Fair, the Tri-County Fair and others that spread awareness of the importance of defensible space, human-caused fires on the district and how to prevent them, fire ecology, and fire safety principles.

Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation and Burned Area Rehabilitation (ES&R/BAR)

Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation efforts have been completed on the Star Creek and Paradise Fires to stabilize and rehabilitate the burned areas. This includes 124 acres of aerial seeding, , dozer line rehabilitation and seeding, and invasive and noxious weed control. In addition, several temporary fences totally approximately 22 miles from the 2011--2014 fires seasons are being removed this winter.

Hand planting of approximately 44,000 sagebrush and bitter brush seedlings is completed on the 2013-2015 fires to accelerate recovery of crucial sage grouse habitat and establish seed sources for future natural recovery. An additional 91,000 seedling will be planted in the spring of 2016 on the 2012 Long Canyon fire to accelerate recovery.

Monitoring of 2012-2014 previous fires is completed, and has been expanded to include pasture level monitoring to help determine if grazing closure standards have been met. Closeout reports for ES&R monitoring for the 2012 fires were submitted in October.



Helicopter seeding operations on the Paradise Fire.

Noxious/Invasive Weeds

The Winnemucca District will be completing 2,500 acres of noxious weed treatment during the winter of 2015-2016 targeting Medusa head rye in Paradise Valley and near McDermitt.

Th office is continuing assistance agreements with Paradise Valley Weed District and Gerlach CWMA. These entities partner with the BLM control weeds across jurisdictional boundaries and leverage funding to complete more on the ground projects.

BLM career-seasonal employees have already accomplished approximately 200 acres of other noxious weeds control, with a fall emphasis on managing Russian Knapweed in riparian areas. Noxious weed control and subsequent native-plant restoration will be a focus area for the noxious weed program in FY2016, with continued prioritization and implementation of a Medusahead Rye management program.

District wide inventory and spot treatment are currently ongoing, with focused treatment and inventory occurring in the Montana Mountains.

Forestry:

Approximately 100 Christmas tree permits and 50 fuelwood permits have been sold to date during fiscal year 2016

WINNEMUCCA DISTRICT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Winnemucca District is currently working on implementation of sage-grouse plan amendment. Several resource specialists plan on attending Table 2-2 training at the end of January.

Ruby Pipeline

In concert with Ruby Pipeline, LLC., the BLM monitors the revegetation outcomes along the right-of-way. Discussions are occurring to look at re-seeding sections along the Right of Way.